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## Picturing Illinois: Twentieth-Century Postcard Art from Chicago to Cairo

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1950s, the girls went from mentally impaired to emotionally impaired or “maladjusted.” But they were still incarcerated at much higher rates than boys and, in Illinois, at four times the rate of girls in Boston. And the harsh environmental circumstances of their lives were still under-emphasized in favor of a psychological analysis rooted in biology.

Rembis is writing a disability history, an important effort in a new field. But his use of theory is excessive, and his theoretical jargon is distracting, diminishing the power of the story. *Defining Deviance* treats a fascinating subject, raising important questions about the malleability of psychological categories to suit the needs and anxieties of the times. Using case studies from the Geneva Reformatory allows Rembis to give voice to the girls themselves, the most compelling part of the book. The historical material in general is engaging, the result of careful and thoughtful scholarship and a spirit of fairness in his assessment of his historical subjects.

*Picturing Illinois: Twentieth-Century Postcard Art from Chicago to Cairo*, by John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xiii, 232 pp. Illustrations (mostly in color), notes, credits, index. \$32.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Jane Simonsen is associate professor of history and women's and gender studies at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. She is the author of “Descendants of Black Hawk: Generations of Identity in Sauk Portraits” (2011) and “On Level Ground: Alexander Gardner's Photographs of the Kansas Prairies” (1999).

The heyday of the postcard, from 1900 to 1930, occurred alongside cultural fascination with urban modernity, whose themes—efficiency, progress, industry—translated effectively to the mass-produced form. With their size and cost inviting visual and verbal terseness, postcards created iconographies of place that functioned as visual shorthand for the complexities of Chicago's urban culture and the Illinois hinterlands. In their visual tour, John Jakle and Keith Sculle follow this upstate-downstate divide, examining streetscapes, factories, and buildings as both real and idealized landscapes.

Interpretive essays bracket two illustrated sections devoted to Chicago and “downstate,” respectively. The preface legitimates the postcard as a window into cultural expectations about landscape; the introduction and epilogue provide interpretive lenses through which to read the postcards. They highlight themes such as urban monumentalism, “self-congratulation” through narratives of progress, and geography as a record of historical change (5). Identifying Chicago as a

publishing hub, the authors note the postcard's role in Chicago's self-representation as modern, urban, and powerful, as opposed to the more prosaic hinterland.

The book's two parts focus first on various districts in Chicago (including key suburbs) and then on "Illinois beyond the Metropolis"—other urban areas such as Springfield and Peoria, and, more briefly (because they were less represented), rural towns and natural areas. Literary voices, including Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser, combine with those of urban observers, and, occasionally, of postcard senders themselves to enrich or provide counterpoints to idealized images of the industrial sublime or "Arcadian" pastoral (182). Historical reality often undercuts representations; for example, an image of the Chicago cruise ship *Christopher Columbus* appears alongside the authors' description of a 1915 passenger-ship tragedy that cost 812 lives. In the process, they provide intriguing details of Chicago history, the impact of politics and transportation on other cities, and architectural history.

Because these sections are organized by location, though, interpretive themes can recede into the background, and the postcard art can sometimes function more as illustration than as text to be read. For example, information about the architecture of the Wrigley Building and Tribune Tower takes precedence over the soaring, impressionistic vista of North Michigan Avenue that accompanies the description; provocative details of the images themselves are sometimes lost in the authors' faithfulness to the material aspects of place. Rare images of people—of Chicago stockyard workers and teamsters and a few of rural families—also interrupt the conventional postcard depiction of monumental buildings and urban grids and suggest meanings of "modernity" that invite even more discussion.

The authors succeed in their effort to establish postcards as worthy of analysis and to suggest their importance as texts through which individuals, private businesses, and governments engaged with state history and landscapes. Moreover, they powerfully articulate how geography served to mitigate the contradictions of "midwestern" identity. Postcards provide a record of state history that celebrates the achievements of modernity, yet leaves tempting clues to the "mindscapes" (xiii) that gave them their meaning.

*Prosperity Far Distant: The Journal of an American Farmer, 1933–1934*, by Charles M. Wiltse; edited by Michael J. Birkner. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012. xxxvi, 272 pp. Photographs, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.